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8 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
9 **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**
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11 RUSSELL JAMES KELLY,
12 CDCR #K-50742

13 Plaintiff,

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15 vs.
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18 JAMES TILTON, Secretary of the
19 California Dep't of Corrections and
Rehabilitation

20 Defendant.
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Civil No. 07-1744 H (RBB)

ORDER:

**(1) GRANTING PLAINTIFF'S
MOTION TO PROCEED *IN FORMA
PAUPERIS*, ASSESSING NO
INITIAL PARTIAL FILING FEE
AND GARNISHING \$350 BALANCE
FROM PRISONER'S TRUST
ACCOUNT [Doc. No. 2]; AND**

**(2) SUA SPONTE DISMISSING
COMPLAINT FOR FAILING TO
STATE A CLAIM PURSUANT TO 28
U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) & § 1915A(b).**

[Doc. No. 2]

24 Plaintiff, an inmate currently incarcerated at Kern Valley State Prison located in Delano,
25 California and proceeding pro se, has filed a civil rights Complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
26 In his Complaint, Plaintiff alleges that he is being held against his will by the California
27 Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. (*See* Compl. at 3.) As a result, Plaintiff seeks
28 an immediate release from custody. (*Id.* at 7.)

1 Plaintiff has not prepaid the \$350 filing fee mandated by 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a) to
 2 commence a civil action; instead, he has filed a Motion to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis* (“IFP”)
 3 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) [Doc. No. 2].

4 **I. Motion to Proceed IFP**

5 Effective April 9, 2006, all parties instituting any civil action, suit or proceeding in a
 6 district court of the United States, except an application for writ of habeas corpus, must pay a
 7 filing fee of \$350. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a). An action may proceed despite a party’s failure to
 8 prepay the entire fee only if the party is granted leave to proceed IFP pursuant to 28 U.S.C.
 9 § 1915(a). *See Rodriguez v. Cook*, 169 F.3d 1176, 1177 (9th Cir. 1999). Prisoners granted leave
 10 to proceed IFP however, remain obligated to pay the entire fee in installments, regardless of
 11 whether the action is ultimately dismissed for any reason. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1) & (2).

12 Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915, as amended by the Prison Litigation Reform Act (“PLRA”), a
 13 prisoner seeking leave to proceed IFP must submit a “certified copy of the trust fund account
 14 statement (or institutional equivalent) for the prisoner for the six-month period immediately
 15 preceding the filing of the complaint.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). From the certified trust account
 16 statement, the Court must assess an initial payment of 20% of (a) the average monthly deposits
 17 in the account for the past six months, or (b) the average monthly balance in the account for the
 18 past six months, whichever is greater, unless the prisoner has no assets. *See* 28 U.S.C.
 19 § 1915(b)(1); 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4). That institution having custody of the prisoner must
 20 collect subsequent payments, assessed at 20% of the preceding month’s income, in any month
 21 in which the prisoner’s account exceeds \$10, and forward those payments to the Court until the
 22 entire filing fee is paid. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2).

23 The Court finds that Plaintiff has attached a certified copy of his trust account statement
 24 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2) and S.D. CAL. CIVLR 3.2. Plaintiff’s trust account statement
 25 shows that he has insufficient funds from which to pay filing fees at this time. *See* 28 U.S.C.
 26 § 1915(b)(4) (providing that “[i]n no event shall a prisoner be prohibited from bringing a civil
 27 action or appealing a civil action or criminal judgment for the reason that the prisoner has no
 28 assets and no means by which to pay the initial partial filing fee.”); *Taylor*, 281 F.3d at 850

(finding that 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4) acts as a “safety-valve” preventing dismissal of a prisoner’s IFP case based solely on a “failure to pay . . . due to the lack of funds available to him when payment is ordered.”). Therefore, the Court **GRANTS** Plaintiff’s Motion to Proceed IFP [Doc. No. 2] and assesses no initial partial filing fee per 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). However, the entire \$350 balance of the filing fees mandated shall be collected and forwarded to the Clerk of the Court pursuant to the installment payment provisions set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

II. Initial Screening per 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) and § 1915A(b)

A. Standard of Review

The PLRA also obligates the Court to review complaints filed by all persons proceeding IFP and by those, like Plaintiff, who are “incarcerated or detained in any facility [and] accused of, sentenced for, or adjudicated delinquent for, violations of criminal law or the terms or conditions of parole, probation, pretrial release, or diversionary program,” “as soon as practicable after docketing.” *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) and § 1915A(b). Under these provisions, the Court must sua sponte dismiss any IFP or prisoner complaint, or any portion thereof, which is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or which seeks damages from defendants who are immune. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) and § 1915A; *Calhoun v. Stahl*, 254 F.3d 845, 845 (9th Cir. 2001) (“[T]he provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) are not limited to prisoners.”); *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc) (noting that 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e) “not only permits but requires” the court to sua sponte dismiss an *in forma pauperis* complaint that fails to state a claim); *Resnick v. Hayes*, 213 F.3d 443, 446 (9th Cir. 2000) (§ 1915A).

Before amendment by the PLRA, the former 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d) permitted sua sponte dismissal of only frivolous and malicious claims. *Lopez*, 203 F.3d at 1126, 1130. An action is frivolous if it lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact. *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324 (1989). However, 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) and § 1915A now mandate that the court reviewing an IFP or prisoner’s suit make and rule on its own motion to dismiss before effecting service of the Complaint by the U.S. Marshal pursuant to FED.R.CIV.P. 4(c)(2). *See Calhoun*, 254 F.3d at 845; *Lopez*, 203 F.3d at 1127; *see also McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601,

604-05 (6th Cir. 1997) (stating that sua sponte screening pursuant to § 1915 should occur “before service of process is made on the opposing parties”); *Barren v. Harrington*, 152 F.3d 1193, 1194 (9th Cir. 1998) (discussing 28 U.S.C. § 1915A).

“[W]hen determining whether a complaint states a claim, a court must accept as true all allegations of material fact and must construe those facts in the light most favorable to the plaintiff.” *Resnick*, 213 F.3d at 447; *Barren*, 152 F.3d at 1194 (noting that § 1915(e)(2) “parallels the language of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6)”; *Andrews*, 398 F.3d at 1121. In addition, the Court has a duty to liberally construe a pro se’s pleadings, *see Karim-Panahi v. Los Angeles Police Dep’t*, 839 F.2d 621, 623 (9th Cir. 1988), which is “particularly important in civil rights cases.” *Ferdik v. Bonzelet*, 963 F.2d 1258, 1261 (9th Cir. 1992). In giving liberal interpretation to a pro se civil rights complaint, however, the court may not “supply essential elements of claims that were not initially pled.” *Ivey v. Board of Regents of the University of Alaska*, 673 F.2d 266, 268 (9th Cir. 1982).

As currently pleaded, it is clear that Plaintiff’s Complaint fails to state a cognizable claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Section 1983 imposes two essential proof requirements upon a claimant: (1) that a person acting under color of state law committed the conduct at issue, and (2) that the conduct deprived the claimant of some right, privilege, or immunity protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1983; *Nelson v. Campbell*, 541 U.S. 637, 124 S. Ct. 2117, 2122 (2004); *Haygood v. Younger*, 769 F.2d 1350, 1354 (9th Cir. 1985) (en banc).

B. Habeas Corpus Relief

In Plaintiff’s Complaint, he alleges that he was acquitted by a jury of criminal charges on February 27, 1997. (*See* Compl. at 3.) Despite this acquittal, Plaintiff claims that he was sentenced to thirty (30) years to life and remains incarcerated under the control of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (“CDCR”). (*Id.*) The only form of relief Plaintiff seeks is an “injunction from holding Plaintiff against his will in the [CDCR].” (*Id.* at 8.)

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1 However, to the extent Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief in the form of a court order
2 granting him release from prison, *see* Compl. at 3-5, such relief is simply not available under 42
3 U.S.C. § 1983. *See Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 500 (1973) (holding that “when a state
4 prisoner is challenging the very fact or duration of his physical imprisonment, and the relief he
5 seeks is a determination that he is entitled to immediate release . . . his sole federal remedy is a
6 writ of habeas corpus.”).

7 Even if Plaintiff were to amend his Complaint to seek monetary damages, this claim
8 would not yet be cognizable pursuant to *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994);
9 *Ramirez v. Galaza*, 334 F.3d 850, 855-56 (9th Cir. 2003) (“Absent such a showing, ‘[e]ven a
10 prisoner who has fully exhausted available state remedies has no cause of action under
11 § 1983....’”) (quoting *Heck*, 512 U.S. at 489), *cert. denied*, 124 S. Ct. 2388 (2004). *Heck* holds
12 that “in order to recover damages for allegedly unconstitutional conviction or imprisonment, or
13 for other harm caused by actions whose unlawfulness would render a conviction or sentence
14 invalid, a section 1983 plaintiff must prove that the conviction or sentence has been reversed on
15 direct appeal, expunged by executive order, declared invalid by a state tribunal authorized to
16 make such determination, or called into question by a federal court’s issuance of a writ of habeas
17 corpus.” *Heck*, 512 U.S. at 486-87. A claim challenging the legality of a conviction or sentence
18 that has not been so invalidated is not cognizable under § 1983. *Id.* at 487; *Edwards v. Balisok*,
19 520 U.S. 641, 643 (1997). In his Complaint, Plaintiff admits that he has not yet had his
20 conviction invalidated and thus, this action is not yet cognizable pursuant to *Heck*.

21 Accordingly, the Court finds that Plaintiff’s Complaint must be **DISMISSED** for failing
22 to state a claim upon which relief can be granted pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)
23 and 1915A. Because it does not appear “at all possible that the plaintiff can correct the
24 defect(s)” of his pleading, further leave to amend is **DENIED** as futile. *See Cahill v. Liberty*
25 *Mut. Ins. Co.*, 80 F.3d 336, 339 (9th Cir. 1996) (denial of a leave to amend is not an abuse of
26 discretion where further amendment would be futile).

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1 **III. Conclusion and Order**

2 Good cause appearing, **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that:

3 (1) Plaintiff's Motion to Proceed IFP pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) is **GRANTED**.

4 (2) The Secretary of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, or his
5 designee, is ordered to collect from Plaintiff's prison trust account the \$350 balance of the filing
6 fee owed in this case by collecting monthly payments from the trust account in an amount equal
7 to twenty percent (20%) of the preceding month's income credited to the account and forward
8 payments to the Clerk of the Court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 in
9 accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). ALL PAYMENTS SHALL BE CLEARLY
10 IDENTIFIED BY THE NAME AND NUMBER ASSIGNED TO THIS ACTION.

11 (3) The Clerk of the Court is directed to serve a copy of this Order on James Tilton,
12 Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, P.O. Box 942883,
13 Sacramento, California, 94283-0001.

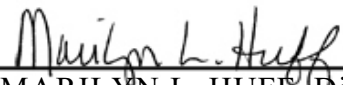
14 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that:

15 (4) Plaintiff's Complaint [Doc. No. 1] is **DISMISSED** for failing to state a claim and
16 without further leave to amend pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A. Plaintiff is
17 further notified that this dismissal may later be counted as a "strike" against him pursuant to 28
18 U.S.C. § 1915(g).¹

19 The Clerk shall close the file.

20 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

21 DATED: September 11, 2007

22 
23 MARILYN L. HUFF, District Judge
24 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

25 ¹ 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) provides that "[i]n no event shall a prisoner bring a civil action or appeal
26 ... under this section if the prisoner has, on 3 or more occasions, while incarcerated or detained in any
27 facility, brought an action or appeal in a court of the United States that was dismissed on the grounds
28 that it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, unless the
prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury." 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g); *Andrews v. King*,
398 F.3d 1113, 1116 n.1 (9th Cir. 2005) ("Pursuant to § 1915(g), a prisoner with three strikes," i.e., prior
federal cases or appeals, brought while the plaintiff was a prisoner, which were dismissed on grounds
that they were frivolous, malicious, or failed to state a claim, "cannot proceed IFP.").